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HEATHEN CLAIMS

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CHRISTIAN DUTY.

BY

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HEATHEN CLAIMS AND CHRISTIAN DUTY.

It is not as a mission worker in even the humblest department of mission work that I have been asked to speak tonight, but as a traveler, and as one who has been made a convert to missions, not by missionary successes, but by seeing in four and a half years of Asiatic traveling the desperate needs of the unchristianized world. There was a time when I was altogether indifferent to missions, and would have avoided a mission station rather than have visited it. But the awful, pressing claims of the unchristianized nations which I have seen have taught me that the work of their conversion to Christ is one to which one would gladly give influence and whatever else God has given to one.

In the few words that I shall address to you tonight I should like (for I cannot tell you anything new or anything that you do not already know) just to pass on some of the ideas which have suggested themselves to my own mind in my long and solitary travels, and perhaps es

pecially since I came home, full of the needs of the heathen world, and to some extent amazed at the apathy and callousness of the Christian Church at home. I have visited the Polynesian Islands, Japan, Southern China, the Malay Peninsula, Ceylon, Northern India, Cashmere, Western Thibet, and Central Asia, Persia, Arabia, and Asia Minor. In each of these countries I have avoided, as much as possible, European settlements, and have scarcely lingered so long as I could have wished at mission stations. My object was to live among the people, and I have lived much in their own houses and among their tents, always with a trustworthy interpreter, sharing their lives as much as possible, and to some extent winning their confidence by means of a medicine chest which I carried. Wherever I have been I have seen sin and sorrow and shame. I cannot tell of fields whitening unto the harvest, nor have I heard the songs of rejoicing laborers bringing the sheaves home. But I have seen work done, the seed sown in tears by laborers sent out by you — honest work, work which has made me more and more earnestly desire to help the cause of missions from a personal knowledge of work in the mission field — but not among the lower races, or the fetich worshipers, or among the simpler systems which destroy men's souls. The reason, perhaps, why I have seen

so little missionary success is because the countries in which I have traveled are the regions of great, elaborate, philosophical religious systems, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Mohammedanism.

Naturally, among those at home there is a disposition to look at the work done. On my own part there may be too great a disposition, possibly, to look at the work left undone, because to me it seems so vast and so appalling. The enthusiasm of Exeter Hall has in it something that to many is delightful and contagious. We sing hopeful, triumphant hymns, we hear of what the Lord has done, of encouragements which a merciful God gives to inadequate and feeble efforts, and some of us, perhaps, think that little remains to be accomplished, and that the kingdoms of this world are about to become "the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ." But such is not the case; and I think that we may, instead of congratulating ourselves upon the work done, though we are thankful for what God has enabled us to do, bow our heads in shame that we have done so little and served so little. And I would like tonight that we should turn away from these enchantments, for enchantments they truly are, and set our faces towards the wilderness, that great, "waste, howling wilderness," in which one thousand millions of our race are wander-

ing in darkness and the shadow of death, without hope, being "without God in the world."

The work is only beginning, and we have barely touched the fringe of it. The natural increase of population in the heathen world is outstripping at this moment all our efforts; and if it is true, and I believe it has never been contradicted, that four millions only have been baptized within this century, it has been also said without contradiction that the natural increase of the heathen world in that time has been two hundred millions—an awful contemplation for us tonight. It is said that there are eight hundred millions on our earth to whom the name of Jesus Christ is unknown, and that ten hundred and thirty millions are not in any sense Christianized. Of these, thirty-five millions pass annually in one ghastly, reproachful, mournful procession into Christless graves. They are dying so very fast! In China alone, taking the lowest computation of the population which has been given, it is estimated that fourteen hundred die every hour, and that in this one day thirty-three thousand Chinese have passed beyond our reach. And if this meeting were to agree to send a missionary tomorrow to China, before he could reach Chinese shores one and a half millions of souls would have passed from this world into eternity. Nineteen centuries have passed away, and only one third

of the population of our earth is even nominally Christian.

We are bound to face these facts and all that they mean for us tonight, and to ask ourselves how we stand in regard to this awful need of the heathen world. We have in this country ¹ 43,000 ordained ministers. If we were to be treated as we treat the heathen, we should have but 220 workers for the United Kingdom, of which number seventy would be women. In China alone we have but one missionary for half a million of people, as if we were to have one minister for Glasgow, or Birmingham, or Manchester, or one of our large cities. I think we may say that to us indeed belongeth shame for this our neglect. The Moravians, as perhaps most here know, have one missionary out of every sixty of their members. We have but one out of every 5,000 of our members. Theirs is an example that we can follow. Were we equally impressed with love and obedience, we should have 200,000 missionaries, and our contributions would be £20,000,000 a year. What an object this is to arouse the sleeping conscience with! We spend £140,000,000, or three guineas a head, upon drink; we smoke £16,000,000, and we hoard £240,000,000; while our whole contributions for the conversion of

¹ Great Britain.

this miserable world are but one and a half million pounds, or ninepence a head. These statistics are dry enough, but they are filled with meaning, and an awful meaning if we would only dwell upon them, each one of us tonight in our own heart in the sight of God.

I think that we are getting into a sort of milk-and-water view of heathenism — not of African heathenism alone, but of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Mohammedanism also, which prevail in Asia. Missionaries come home, and they refrain from shocking audiences by recitals of the awful sins of the heathen and Moslem world. When traveling in Asia, it struck me very much how little we heard, how little we know, as to how sin is enthroned and deified and worshiped. There is sin and shame everywhere. Mohammedanism is corrupt to the very core. The morals of Mohammedan countries, perhaps in Persia in particular, are corrupt, and the imaginations very wicked. How corrupt Buddhism is! How corrupt Buddhists are! It is an astonishment to find that there is scarcely a single thing that makes for righteousness in the life of the unchristianized nations. There is no public opinion interpenetrated by Christianity which condemns sin or wrong. There is nothing except the conscience of some few who are seeking after God “lest haply they might feel after him who is not

far from every one of us." And over all this seething mass of sin and shame and corruption hovers "the ruler of the darkness of this world," rejoicing in the chains with which he has bound two thirds of the human race.

Just one or two remarks as to what these false faiths do. They degrade women with an infinite degradation. I have lived in zenanas and harems, and have seen the daily life of the secluded women, and I can speak from bitter experience of what their lives are—the intellect dwarfed, so that the woman of twenty or thirty years of age is more like a child of eight intellectually; while all the worst passions of human nature are stimulated and developed in a fearful degree—jealousy, envy, murderous hate, intrigue, running to such an extent that in some countries I have hardly ever been in a women's house or near a women's tent without being asked for drugs with which to disfigure the favorite wife, to take away her life, or to take away the life of the favorite wife's infant son. This request has been made of me nearly two hundred times. This is only an indication of the daily life of whose miseries we think so little, and which is a natural product of the systems that we ought to have subverted long ago.

It follows necessarily that there is also an infinite degradation of men. The whole 'conti-

ment of Asia is corrupt. It is the scene of barbarities, tortures, brutal punishments, oppression, official corruption, which is worst under Mohammedan rule — of all things which are the natural products of systems which are without God in Christ. There are no sanctities of home, nothing to tell of righteousness, temperance, or judgment to come; only a fearful looking for in the future of fiery indignation from some quarter, they know not what, a dread of everlasting rebirths into forms of obnoxious reptiles or insects, or of tortures which are infinite, and which are depicted in pictures of fiendish ingenuity.

And then one comes to what sickness is to them. If one speaks of the sins, one is bound to speak of the sorrows too. The sorrows of heathenism impressed me — sorrows which humanitarianism, as well as Christianity, should lead us to roll away. Sickness means to us tenderness all about us, the hushed footfall in the house, everything sacrificed for the sick person, no worry or evil allowed to enter into the sick room, kindness of neighbors who, maybe, have been strangers to us, the skill of doctors ready to alleviate every symptom — all these are about our sick beds, together with loving relations and skilled nurses; and if any of us are too poor to be nursed at home, there are magnificent hospitals where everything that

skill and money can do is provided for the poorest among us. And, besides, there are the Christian ministries of friends and ministers, the reading of the Word of God, the repetition of hymns full of hope—all that can make a sick bed a time of peace and blessing enters our own sick room, and even where the sufferer has been impenitent, He “who is able to save to the very uttermost” stands by the sick bed ready even in the dying hour to cleanse and receive the parting soul. In the case of the Christian the crossing of the river is a time of triumph and of hope, and “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” sounds over his dying bed.

But what does sickness mean to millions of our fellow creatures in heathen lands? Throughout the East sickness is believed to be the work of demons. The sick person at once becomes an object of loathing and terror, is put out of the house, is taken to an out-house, is poorly fed and rarely visited, or the astrologers, or priests, or medicine men, or wizards assemble, beating big drums and gongs, blowing horns, and making the most fearful noises. They light gigantic fires and dance round them with their unholy incantations. They beat the sick person with clubs to drive out the demon. They lay him before a roasting fire till his skin is blistered, and then throw

him into cold water. They stuff the nostrils of the dying with aromatic mixtures or mud, and in some regions they carry the chronic sufferer to a mountain top, placing barley balls and water beside him, and leave him to die alone. If there were time I could tell you things that would make it scarcely possible for any one beginning life without a fixed purpose to avoid going into training as a medical missionary. The woe and sickness in the unchristianized world are beyond telling, and I would ask my sisters here to remember that these woes press most heavily upon women, who, in the seclusion of their homes, are exposed to nameless barbarities in the hour of "the great pain and peril of childbirth," and often perish miserably from barbarous maltreatment.

This is only a glimpse of the sorrows of the heathen world. May we seek to realize in our own days of sickness and the days of sickness of those dear to us what illness means for those millions who are without God in the world, and go from this meeting resolved, cost what it may, to save them from these woes, and to carry the knowledge of Christ into these miserable homes! What added effort can we make? The duty of all Christians towards missions has been summed up in these words, "Go. Let go. Help go." The need for men and women is vast, and I see many young men

and young women here who perhaps have not yet decided upon their life work. Then go! Young Christian friends, here is the noblest opening for you that the world presents. A life consecrated in foreign lands to the service of the Master is, I believe, one of the happiest lives that men or women live upon this earth. It may be that advancement in the professions at home may be sacrificed by going to the foreign field; but in the hour when the soldier lays his dented armor down, after the fight has been fought, and the hands which were pierced for our redemption crown his brow with the crown of life, and the prize of the high calling of God is won, will there be one moment's regret, think you, for the abandoned prizes of the professions at home? "Let go." Help others to go by rejoicing in their going, by giving them willingly.

Then comes the other great question of "Help go," and this subject of increased self-sacrifice has occupied my thoughts very much indeed within the last few months. Our responsibilities are increased by our knowledge. We pray God to give the means to send forth laborers. Has he not given us the means? Have we not the means to send forth missionaries; have not our friends the means? And when we pray God to give the means, may we not rather pray him to consume the selfish-

ness which expends our means upon ourselves?
Dare we, can we, sing such hymns as

All the vain things that charm me most
I sacrifice them to His blood,

and yet surround ourselves with these "vain things"—the lust of the eyes and the vain-glory of life? Our style of living is always rising. We are always accumulating. We fill our houses with pleasant things. We decorate our lives till further decoration seems almost impossible. Our expenditure on ourselves is enormous; and when I returned from Asia two years ago I thought that the expenditure on the decoration of life among Christian people had largely risen, and I think so still, and think so increasingly. Now, we have many possessions. We have old silver, we have jewelry, objects of art, rare editions of books, things that have been given to us by those we have loved, and which have most sacred associations. All these would bring their money value if they were sold. May we not hear the Lord's voice saying to us in regard to these our treasured accumulations, "Lovest thou me more than these?" It is time that we should readjust our expenditure in the light of our increased knowledge; and not in the light of our increased knowledge alone, but that we should go carefully over our stewardship at

the foot of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the light of those eyes which closed in death for our redemption.

The time is almost at an end, and yet there are one or two things I should like to say. There can be no arbitrary law about giving. If we readjusted, by our increased knowledge, personal needs and Christ's needs at the foot of the cross, each one of us here tonight would be sure, I think I may say, to do the right thing. Let us be honest in our self-denial, and not think that we are carrying the burdens of this great, perishing, heathen world by touching them lightly with our fingers, but let us bear them till they eat into the shrinking flesh, and so let us fulfill the law of Christ. Let us entreat him, even with strong crying and tears, to have mercy, not only on the Christless heathen, but on the Christlessness within our own hearts, on our shallow sympathies, and hollow self-denials, and on our infinite callousness to the woes of this perishing world, which God so loved that he gave his only Son for its redemption.

In conclusion, let me say that the clock which marks so inexorably the time allotted to each speaker marks equally inexorably the passing away of life. Since I began to speak—and it is a most awful consideration—2,500 human beings, at the lowest computation, have

passed before the bar of God. And though the veil of the invisible is thick, and our ears are dull of hearing, can we not hear a voice saying to each of us, "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." Every minute eighty-three of our Christless brethren and sisters are passing into eternity.

The fields are white unto harvest, but who is to be the reaper? Is it to be the Lord of the harvest, or him who has been sowing tares ever since the world began? Let each of us do our utmost by any amount of self-sacrifice to see that it shall be the Lord of the harvest. And may the constraining memories of the cross of Christ, and that great love wherewith he loved us, be so in us that we may pass that love on to those who are perishing. "We know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor," and we hear his voice tonight ringing down through ages of selfishness and luxury and neglected duty, solemnly declaring that the measure of our love for our brethren must be nothing less than the measure of his own. May he touch all our hearts with the spirit of self-sacrifice and with the inspiration of that love of his which, when he came to redeem the world, KEPT NOTHING BACK!